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Jean Mathieu
August

BIRDS OF PASSAGE

[*Edition limited to* 250 *copies.*]

BIRDS

OF

PASSAGE

SONGS OF THE ORIENT AND OCCIDENT

BY

MATHILDE BLIND

London
CHATTO & WINDUS, PICCADILLY
1895

LOAN STACK

"The Bird of Time has but a little way
To flutter—and the bird is on the wing."

OMAR KHAYYÁM.

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BIRDS OF PASSAGE.

PRELUDE.

WHAT a twitter! what a tumult! what a whirr of
wheeling wings!
Birds of Passage hear the message which the
Equinoctial brings.

Birds of Passage hear the message, and beneath the
flying clouds,
Mid the falling leaves of autumn, congregate in
clamorous crowds.

Shall they venture on the voyage? are the nestlings
fledged for flight;
Fit to face the fluctuant storm-winds and the ele-
mental night?

What a twitter! what a tumult! to the wild wind's
marching song
Multitudinous Birds of Passage round the cliffs of
England throng.

And o'er tempest-trodden Ocean, cloud-entangled
day and night,
Birds on birds, in corporate motion, wing a common-
wealth in flight.

Waves, like hollow graves beneath them, hoarsely
howling, yawn for prey ;
And the welkin glooms above them shifting form-
less, grey in grey.

And across the Bay of Biscay on undaunted wing
they flee,
Where mild seas move musically murmuring of
the Odyssey ;

Where the gurgling whirlpools glitter and by soft
Circean Straits,
Fell Charybdis lies in ambush, and the ravenous
Scylla waits ;

Where a large Homeric laughter lingers in the
echoing caves,
And in playful exultation Dolphins leap from
dimpling waves ;

Where, above the fair Sicilian, flock-browsed, flower-
pranked meadows, looms
Ætna—hoariest of Volcanoes—ominously veiled
in fumes ;

Where the seas roll blue and bluer, high and higher
arch the skies,
And as measureless as ocean new horizons meet
the eyes ;

Where at night the ancient heavens bend above
the ancient earth,
With the young-eyed Stars enkindled fresh as at
their hour of birth ;

Where old Egypt's desert, stretching leagues on
leagues of level land,
Gleams with threads of channelled waters, green
with palms on either hand ;

Where the Fellah strides majestic through the
glimmering dourah plain,
And in rosy flames flamingoes rise from rustling
sugar-cane ;—

On and on, along old Nilus, seeking still an ampler
light,
O'er its monumental mountains, Birds of Passage
take their flight.

Where the sacred Isle of Philæ, twinned within the
sacred stream,
Floats, like some rapt Opium-eater's labyrinthine
lotos dream,

Birds on birds take up their quarters in each
creviced capital,
In each crack of frieze and cornice, in each cleft of
roof and wall.

And within those twilight-litten, holy halls of
Death and Birth,
Even the gaily twittering swallows, even the
swallows, hush their breath.

And they cast the passing shadows of their
palpitating wings
O'er the fallen gods of Egypt and the prostrate
heads of Kings.

Even as shadows Birds of Passage cast upon their
onward flight
Have men's generations vanished, waned and
vanished into night.

SONGS

OF THE

ORIENT.

WELCOME TO EGYPT.

THE Palms stood motionless as Pyramids
  Against the golden halo of the sky ;
  Interminable crops of wheat and rye
Mantled the plain with downy coverlids
Of silken green, where little freckled kids
  Frolicked beneath the staid maternal eye ;
  And babe-led buffaloes plashed trampling by,
Sprinkling cool water on their dusty lids.

Spake the grave Arab, as his flashing glance
Swept the large, luminous verdure's dewy sheen,
Sedately, with a bronze-like countenance :
  "Nehârak Saîd! Lo, this happy day,
My country decks herself in sumptuous green,
  And smiling welcome, Lady, bids you stay."

THE SPHINX.

WANDERER, behold Life's riddle writ in stone,
Fronting Eternity with lidless eyes;
Of all that is beneath the changing skies,
Immutably abiding and alone.
The handiwork of hands unseen, unknown,
When Pharaohs of immortal dynasties
Built Pyramids to brave the centuries,
Cheating Annihilation of her own.

The heart grows hushed before it. Nay, methinks
That Man, and all on which Man wastes his breath,
The World, and all the World inheriteth,
With infinite, inexorable links
Grappling the soul; that love, hate, birth and death
Dwindle to nothingness before thee—Sphinx.

SPHINX-MONEY.

WHERE Pyramids and temple-wrecks are piled
Confusedly on camel-coloured sands,
And the mute Arab motionlessly stands,
Like some swart god who never wept or smiled,—
I picked up mummy relics of the wild
(As sea-shells once with clutching baby hands),
And felt a wafture from old Motherlands,
And all the morning wonder of a Child

To find Sphinx-money. So the Beduin calls
Small fossils of the waste. Nay, poet's gold:
'Twill give thee entrance to those rites of old,
When hundred-gated Thebes, with storied walls,
Gleamed o'er her Plain, and vast processions rolled
To Amon-Ra through Karnak's pillared halls.

THE TOMBS OF THE KINGS.

WHERE the mummied Kings of Egypt, wrapped
in linen fold on fold,
Couched for ages in their coffins, crowned with
crowns of dusky gold,

Lie in subterranean chambers, biding to the day of
doom,
Counterfeit life's hollow semblance in each mazy
mountain tomb,

Grisly in their gilded coffins, mocking masks of
skin and bone,
Yet remain in change unchanging, balking Nature
of her own ;

Mured in mighty Mausoleums, walled in from the night and day,
Lo, the mortal Kings of Egypt hold immortal Death at bay.

For—so spake the Kings of Egypt—those colossal ones whose hand
Held the peoples from Pitasa to the Kheta's conquered land ;

Who, with flash and clash of lances and war-chariots, stormed and won
Many a town of stiff-necked Syria to high-towering Askalon :

"We have been the faithful stewards of the deathless gods on high ;
We have built them starry temples underneath the starry sky.

"We have smitten rebel nations, as a child is
whipped with rods:
We the living incarnation of imperishable
gods.

"Shall we suffer Death to trample us to nothing-
ness? and must
We be scattered, as the whirlwind blows about the
desert dust?

"No! Death shall not dare come near us, nor
Corruption shall not lay
Hands upon our sacred bodies, incorruptible as
day.

"Let us put a bit and bridle, and rein in Time's
headlong course;
Let us ride him through the ages as a master rides
his horse.

"On the changing earth unchanging let us bide
till Time shall end,
Till, reborn in blest Osiris, mortal with Immortal
blend."

Yea, so spake the Kings of Egypt, they whose
lightest word was law,
At whose nod the far-off nations cowered, stricken
dumb with awe.

And Fate left the haughty rulers to work out their
monstrous doom ;
And, embalmed with myrrh and ointments, they
were carried to the tomb ;

Through the gate of Bab-el-Molouk, where the
sulphur hills lie bare,
Where no green thing casts a shadow in the noon's
tremendous glare ;

Where the unveiled Blue of heaven in its bare intensity
Weighs upon the awe-struck spirit with the world's immensity ;

Through the Vale of Desolation, where no beast or bird draws breath,
To the Coffin-Hills of Tuat—the Metropolis of Death.

Down—down—down into the darkness, where, on either hand, dread Fate,
In the semblance of a serpent, watches by the dolorous gate ;

Down—down—down into the darkness, where no gleam of sun or star
Sheds its purifying radiance from the living world afar ;

Where in labyrinthine windings, darkly hidden, down and down,—
Proudly on his marble pillow, with old Egypt's double crown,

And his mien of cold commandment, grasping still his staff of state,
Rests the mightiest of the Pharaohs, whom the world surnamed the Great.

Swathed in fine Sidonian linen, crossed hands folded on the breast,
There the mummied Kings of Egypt lie within each painted chest.

And upon their dusky foreheads Pleiades of flaming gems,
Glowing through the nether darkness, flash from luminous diadems.

Where is Memphis? Like a Mirage, melted into
empty air:
But these royal gems yet sparkle richly on their
raven hair.

Where is Thebes in all her glory, with her gates
of beaten gold?
Where Syenê, or that marvel, Heliopolis of
old?

Where is Edfu? Where Abydos? Where those
pillared towns of yore
Whose auroral temples glittered by the Nile's thick-
peopled shore?

Gone as evanescent cloudlands, Alplike in the
afterglow;
But these Kings hold fast their bodies of four
thousand years ago.

Sealed up in their Mausoleums, in the bowels of the hills,
There they hide from dissolution and Death's swiftly grinding mills.

Scattering fire, Uræus serpents guard the Tombs' tremendous gate ;
While Thoth holds the trembling balance, weighs the heart and seals its fate.

And a multitude of mummies in the swaddling clothes of death,
Ferried o'er the sullen river, on and on still hasteneth.

And around them and above them, blazoned on the rocky walls,
Crowned with stars, enlaced by serpents, in divine processionals,

Ibis-headed, jackal-featured, vulture-hooded, pass on high,
Gods on gods through Time's perspectives—pilgrims of Eternity.

There, revealed by fitful flashes, in a gloom that may be felt,
Wild Chimæras flash from darkness, glittering like Orion's belt.

And on high, o'er shining waters, in their barks the gods sail by,
In the Sunboat and the Moonboat, rowed across the rose-hued sky.

Night, that was before Creation, watches sphinx-like, starred with eyes,
And the hours and days are passing, and the years and centuries.

But these mummied Kings of Egypt, pictures of
a perished race,
Lie, of busy Death forgotten, face by immemorial
face.

Though the glorious sun above them, burning on
the naked plain,
Clothes the empty wildernesses with the golden,
glowing grain ;

Though the balmy Moon above them, floating in
the milky Blue,
Fills the empty wildernesses with a silver fall
of dew ;

Though life comes and flies unresting, like the
shadow which a dove
Casts upon the Sphinx, in passing, for a moment
from above ;—

Still these mummied Kings of Egypt, wrapped in linen, fold on fold,
Bide through ages in their coffins, crowned with crowns of dusky gold.

Had the sun once brushed them lightly, or a breath of air, they must
Instantaneously have crumbled into evanescent dust.

Pale and passive in their prisons, they have conquered, chained to death ;
And their lineaments look living now as when they last drew breath !

Have they conquered ? Oh the pity of those Kings within their tombs,
Locked in stony isolation in those petrifying glooms !

Motionless where all is motion in a rolling
Universe,
Heaven, by answering their prayer, turned it to a
deadly curse.

Left them fixed where all is fluid in a world of
star-winged skies ;
Where, in myriad transformations, all things pass
and nothing dies ;

Nothing dies but what is tethered, kept when
Time would set it free,
To fulfil Thought's yearning tension upward
through Eternity.

HYMN TO HORUS.

HAIL, God revived in glory!
The night is over and done;
Far mountains wrinkled and hoary,
Fair cities great in story,
Flash in the rising sun.

Behold the Dawn uncloses
The shutters of the night;
The Waste and her oases
Blossoms a rose of roses
Beneath thy rose-red light.

Hail, golden House of Horus,
Lap of heaven's holiest God!

From lotos-banks before us
Birds in ecstatic chorus
  Fly, singing, from the sod.

Up, up, into the shining,
  Translucent morning sky,
No longer dull and pining,
With drooping plumes declining,
  The storks and eagles fly.

The Nile amid his rushes
  Reflects thy risen disk;
A light of gladness gushes
Through kindling halls, and flushes
  Each flaming Obelisk.

Vast Temples catch thy splendour;
  Vistas of columns shine
Celestial, with a tender
Rose-bloom on every slender
  Papyrus-pillared shrine.

In manifold disguises,
And under many names,
Thrice-holy son of Isis,
We worship him who rises
A child-god fledged in flames.

Hail, sacred Hawk, who, winging,
Crossest the heavenly sea!
With harp-playing, with singing,
With linen robes, white clinging,
We come, fair God, to thee.

Thou whom our soul espouses,
When weary of the way,
Enter our golden houses,
And, with thy mystic spouses,
Rest from the long, long way.

NUIT.

THE all upholding,
The all enfolding,
The all beholding,
    Most secret Night ;
From whose abysses,
With wordless blisses,
The Sun's first kisses,
    Called gods to light.

One god undying,
But multiplying,
Restlessly trying,
    Doing : undone.

Through myriad changes,
He sweeps and ranges;
But life estranges
Many in one.

In wild commotion,
Out of the ocean,
With moan and motion,
Waves upon waves,
Mingling in thunder,
Rise and go under:
Break, life, asunder;
Night has her graves.

EGYPTIAN THEOSOPHY.

FAR in the introspective East
A meditative Memphian Priest

Would solve—such is the Sage's curse—
The Riddle of the Universe.

Thought, turning round itself, revolved,
How was this puzzling World evolved?

How came the starry sky to be,
The sun, the earth, the Nile, the sea?

And Man, most tragi-comic Man,
Whence came he here, and where began?

Communing with the baffling sky,
Who twinkled, but made no reply,

He brooded, till his heated brain
Grew fairly addled with the strain.

For in that dim, benighted age
Philosopher and hoary sage

Had not yet had the saving grace
To teach the Schools that Time and Space,

And all the marvels they contain,
Are but the phantoms of the brain.

But that profound Egyptian Seer
Maybe—who knows?—came pretty near;

When, after days of strenuous fast,
He hit the startling truth at last;

And on select, mysterious nights,
Veiled in occult, symbolic rites :

He taught—that once upon a time—
To disbelieve it were a crime—

The World's great egg—refute who can,
That meditates on Life and Man—

While deafening cacklings spread the news—
Was laid by an Almighty Goose.

THE MOON OF RAMADÂN.

THE sunset melts upon the Nile,
The stony desert glows,
Beneath heaven's universal smile,
One burning damask rose ;
And like a Peri's pearly boat,
No longer than a span,
Look, faint on fiery sky afloat,
The Moon of Ramadân.

Our boat drifts idly with the Stream,
Our boatmen ship the oar ;
Vistas of endless temples gleam
On either topaz shore ;

And swimming over groves of Palm,
A crescent weak and wan,
There steals into the perfect calm
The Moon of Ramadân.

All nature seems to bask in peace
And hush her lowest sigh ;
Above the river's golden fleece
The happy Halcyons fly.
And lost in some old lotos dream,
The pensive Pelican
Sees mirrored in the mazy stream
The Moon of Ramadân.

Black outlined on the golden air,
A turbaned Silhouette,
The Mueddin invites to prayer
From many a Minaret.
Our dusky boatmen hear the call,
And prostrate, man on man,

They bow, adoring, one and all,
The Moon of Ramadân.

Where Luxor's rose-flushed columns shine
Above the river's brim,
The priests with incense once, and wine,
Made sacrifice to Him,
The highest god of Thebes, and head
Of all the heavenly clan ;
But now the Moslem hails instead
The Moon of Ramadân.

The gods have come, the gods have gone,
Yet wedded to their walls,
Winged with the serpent of the Sun
In mute processionals,
They stride from door to massy door,
Bound nations in their van,
Though Amon's Sun has waned before
The Moon of Ramadân.

Yea, even proud Egypt's proudest king,
  Who chastised rebel lands,
And brought his gods for offering
  Mountains of severed hands;
Who singly, like a god of War,
  Smote hosts that swerved and ran,
Lies low 'neath Allah's scimetar—
  The Moon of Ramadân.

And Isis, Queen, whose sacred disk's
  Horned splendour crowned her brow,
While fires of flashing Obelisks
  Flamed in the Afterglow;
And white-robed priests who served her shrine
  Have turned Mahommedan,
And worship Him who wears for sign
  The Moon of Ramadân.

The rosy lotos, flower and leaf,
  Which wreathed each sacred lake,

With Nature's loveliest bas-relief,
Has followed in their wake;
Yea, with the last true Pharaoh's death,
The lotos leaves, grown wan,
Have changed to lily white beneath
The Moon of Ramadân.

The gods may come, the gods may go,
And royal realms change hands;
But the most ancient Nile will flow,
And flood the desert sands;
And nightly will he glass the stars'
Unearthly caravan,
Nor care if it be Rome's red Mars
Or Moon of Ramadân.

The sunset fades upon the Nile;
The desert's stony gloom,
Receding blankly mile on mile,
Grows silent as a tomb.

All weary wanderers, man and beast,
Hie, fasting, to the Khan,
While shines above their nightly feast
The Moon of Ramadân.

THE BEAUTIFUL BEESHAREEN BOY.

BEAUTIFUL, black-eyed boy,
O lithe-limbed Beeshareen!
Face that finds no maid coy,
Page for some peerless queen:
Some Orient queen of old,
Sumptuous in woven gold,
Close-clinging fold on fold,
Lightning, with gems between.

Bred in the desert, where
Only to breathe and be
Alive in living air
Is finest ecstasy;

Where just to ride or rove,
With sun or stars above,
Intoxicates like love,
When love shall come to thee.

Thy lovely limbs are bare ;
Only a rag, in haste,
Draped with a princely air,
Girdles thy slender waist.
And gaudy beads and charms,
Dangling from neck and arms,
Ward off dread spells and harms
Of Efreets of the waste.

Caressed of wind and sun,
Across the white-walled town
Fawnlike we saw thee run,
Light Love in Mocha brown !

Wild Cupid, without wings,
Twanging thy viol strings;
With crocodiles and rings
Bartered for half a crown.

Spoilt darling of our bark,
Smiling with teeth as white
As when across the dark
There breaks a flash of light.
And what a careless grace
Showed in thy gait and pace;
Eyes starlike in a face
Sweet as a Nubian night!

Better than Felt or Fez,
High on thy forehead set,
Countless in lock and tress,
Waved a wild mane of jet.

Kings well might envy thee
What courts but rarely see,
Curls of rich ebony
  Coiled in a coronet.

Lo—in dim days long since—
  The strolling Almehs tell,
Thou shouldst have been a prince,
  Boy of the ebon fell!
If truth the poet sings,
Thy tribe, oh Beduin, springs
From those lost tribes of Kings,
  Once Kings in Israel.

Ah me! the camp-fires gleam
  Out yonder, where the sands
Fade like a lotos dream
  In hollow twilight lands.

Our sail swells to the blast,
Our boat speeds far and fast,
Farewell! And to the last
Smile, waving friendly hands.

* * * * * *

From England's storm-girt isle,
O'er seas where seagulls wail,
Rocked on the rippling Nile,
We drift with drooping sail.
On waters hushed at night,
Where stars of Egypt write
In hieroglyphs of light
Their undeciphered tale.

Forlorn sits Assouan;
Where is her boy, her pride?—
Now in the lamplit Khan,
Now by the riverside,

Or where the Soudanese,
Under mimosa trees,
Chaunt mournful melodies,
We've sought him far and wide.

Oh, desert-nurtured Child,
How dared they carry thee,
Far from thy native Wild,
Across the Western Sea?
Packed off, poor boy, at last,
With many a plaster cast
Of plinth and pillar vast,
And waxen mummies piled!

Ah! just like other ware,
For a lump sum or so
Shipped to the World's great Fair—
The big Chicago Show!

With mythic beasts and things,
Beetles and bulls with wings,
And imitation Sphinx,
Ranged row on curious row!

Beautiful, black-eyed boy;
Ah me! how strange it is
That thou, the desert's joy,
Whom heavenly winds would kis
With Ching and Chang-hwa ware,
Blue pots and bronzes rare,
Shouldst now be over there
Shown at Porkopolis.

Gone like a lovely dream,
Child of the starry smile;
Gone from the glowing stream
Glassing its greenest isle!

We've sought, but sought in vain;
Thou wilt not come again,
Never for bliss or pain,
Home to thy orphaned Nile.

THE DYING DRAGOMAN.

FAR in the fiery wilderness,
Beyond the town of Assouan,
Left languishing in sore distress,
There lay a dying Dragoman.
Alone amid the waste, alone,
The hot sand burnt him to the bone;
And on his breast, like heated stone,
The burden of the air did press.

His head was pillowed on a tomb,
Reared to some holy Sheik of old;
The irresistible Simoom
Whirled drifts of sand that rose and rolled

Around him, and the panting air
Was one sulphureous spectral glare,
Shot with such gleams as lights the lair
Of tigers in a jungle's gloom.

Groaning, he closed his bloodshot eyes,
As if to shut out all he feared ;
And greedily a swarm of flies
Fell on his face and tangled beard.
He lay like one who ne'er would lift
His head above that ashy drift ;
When lo, there gleamed across a rift
The blue oasis of the skies.

Like smoke dispersing far and wide,
The draggled sands were blown away ;
The wild clouds in a refluent tide
Receded from the face of day.

The lingering airs yet lightly blew
Till the last speck cleared out of view,
And left the hushed Eternal Blue,
And nothing else beside.

Then once again, with change of moods,
A mighty shadow, broadening, fell
Across those shadeless solitudes,
Without a Palm, without a Well.
Wing wedged in wing, an ordered mass
Unnumbered numbers pass and pass,
As if one Will, one only, was
In all those moving multitudes.

A chord thrilled in the sick man's brain ;
He raised his heavy-lidded eyes,
He raised his heavy head with pain,
And caught a glimpse of netted skies,

Meshed in ten thousand wings in flight
That cleft the air. Oh wondrous sight!
He gasped, he shrieked in sheer delight:
"The Storks! The Storks fly home again!

"I too, O Storks, I too, even I,
Would see my native land again.
Oh, had I wings that I might fly
With you, wild birds, across the main!
Take, take me to the land, I pray,
The land where nests are full in May,
The land where my young children play:
Oh, take me with you, or I die.

"My lonely heart blooms like a flower,
My children, when I think of you;
My love is like an April shower,
And fills my heart with drops of dew.

Along their unknown tracks, ah me!
The Storks will fly across the sea;
My children soon will hail with glee
Their red bills on the rain-washed tower."

Home-sickness seized him for the herds
That browse upon the fresh green leas;
Home-sickness for the cuckoo birds
That shout afar in feathery trees;
For running stream and rippling rill
That, racing, turned his woodland mill:
And tears on tears began to fill
His eyes, confusing all he sees.

Again he doats on rosy cheeks
Of children rolling in the grass;
Again the busy days and weeks,
The months and years serenely pass.

Black forest clocks tick day and night,
His board and bed are snowy white,
His humble house is just as bright
As if it were a house of glass.

Again, beneath the high-peaked roof,
His wife's unresting shuttle flies
Across the even warp and woof;
Again his thrifty mother plies
Her wheel, that hums like noontide bees;
And lint-locked babes about her knees
Hark to strange tales of talking trees,
And Storks deep versed in sage replies.

Again the ring of swinging chimes
Calls all the pious folk to church,
With shining Sunday face, betimes,
Through rustling woods of beech and birch

Full of moist glimmering hollows where
The pines bow murmuring as in prayer,
And musically through the air
The forest's mighty Choral swells.

Again, O Lord, again he sees
The place where Heaven came down one day;
Where, in a space of bloom and bees,
He won his wife one morn of May.
Warm pulses shook and thrilled his blood,
Wild birds were singing in the wood,
The flowering world in bridal mood
Joined in the Pinewood's symphonies.

Again, O Lord, in grief and fear,
He bids good-bye to all he loves;
The waters swell, the woods are sere,
The Storks are gone, and hushed the doves.

He goes with them ; he goes to heal
The sickness whose insidious seal
Is set on him. Ah, tears will steal
And blur the Storks that disappear.

A furnace fire behind the hill,
The sun has burnt itself away ;
The ghost of light, transparent, chill,
Yet floats upon the edge of day.
And all the desert holds its breath
As if it felt and crouched beneath
The filmy, flying bat of death
About a heart for ever still.

And one by one, seraphic, bland,
The bright stars open in the skies ;
And large above the Shadow land
The white-faced moon begins to rise.

And all the wilderness grows wan
Beneath the stars, that one by one
Look down upon the lifeless man
As if they were his children's eyes.

A FANTASY.

I WAS an Arab,
  I loved my horse ;
Swift as an arrow
  He swept the course.

Sweet as a lamb
  He came to hand ;
He was the flower
  Of all the land.

Through lonely nights
  I rode afar;
God lit His lights—
  Star upon star.

God's in the desert;
His breath the air:
Beautiful desert,
Boundless and bare!

Free as the wild wind,
Light as a foal;
Ah, there is room there
To stretch one's soul.

Far reached my thought,
Scant were my needs:
A few bananas
And lotus seeds.

Sparkling as water
Cool in the shade,
Ibrahim's daughter,
Beautiful maid.

Out of thy Kulleh,
Fairest and first,
Give me to drink
Quencher of thirst.

I am athirst, girl ;
Parched with desire,
Love in my bosom
Burns as a fire.

Green thy oasis,
Waving with Palms ;
Oh, be no niggard,
Maid, with thy alms.

Kiss me with kisses,
Buds of thy mouth,
Sweeter than Cassia
Fresh from the South.

Bind me with tresses,
Clasp with a curl;
And in caresses
Stifle me, girl.

I was an Arab
Ages ago!
Hence this home-sickness
And all my woe.

THE DESERT.

UNCIRCUMSCRIBED, unmeasured, vast,
Eternal as the Sea ;
What lacks the tidal sea thou hast—
Profound stability.

Beneath the sun that burns and brands
In hushed Noon's halting breath,
Calm as the Sphinx upon thy sands
Thou art—nay, calm as death.

The desert foxes hide in holes,
The jackal seeks his lair ;
The sombre rocks, like reddening coals,
Glow lurid in the glare.

Only some vulture far away,
Bald-headed, harpy-eyed,
Flaps down on lazy wing to prey
On what has lately died.

No palm tree lifts a lonely shade,
No dove is on the wing;
It seems a land which Nature made
Without a living thing,

Or wreckage of some older world,
Ere children grew, or flowers,
When rocks and hissing stones were hurled
In hot, volcanic showers.

The solemn Blue bends over all;
Far as winged thought may flee
Roll ridges of black mountain wall,
And flat sands like the sea.

No trace of footsteps to be seen,
  No tent, no smoking roof;
Nay, even the vagrant Beeshareen
  Keeps warily aloof.

But yon, mid tumbled hillocks prone,
  Some human form I scan—
A human form, indeed, but stone:
  A cold, colossal Man!

How came he here mid piling sands,
  Like some huge cliff enisled,
Osiris-wise, with folded hands,
  Mute spirit of the Wild?

Ages ago the hands that hewed,
  And in the living rock
Carved this Colossus, granite-thewed,
  And curled each crispy lock:

Ages ago have dropped to rest,
And left him passive, prone,
Forgotten on earth's barren breast,
Half statue and half stone.

And Persia ruled and Palestine;
And o'er her violet seas
Arose, with marble gods divine,
The grace of god-like Greece.

And Rome, the Mistress of the World,
Amid her diadem
Of Eastern Empires set impearled
The Scarab's mystic gem.

Perchance he has been lying here
Since first the world began,
Poor Titan of some earlier sphere,
Of prehistoric Man!

To whom we are as idle flies,
That fuss and buzz their day ;
While still immutable he lies,
As long ago he lay.

Empurpled in the Afterglow,
Thou, with the Sun alone,
Of all the stony waste below,
Art King, but king of stone !

Uncircumscribed, unmeasured, vast,
Eternal as the Sea,
The present here becomes the past,
For all futurity.

SCARABÆUS SISYPHUS.

I'VE watched thee, Scarab! Yea, an hour in vain
I've watched thee, slowly toiling up the hill,
Pushing thy lump of mud before thee still
With patience infinite and stubborn strain.
Strive as thou mayst, spare neither time nor pain,
To screen thy burden from all chance of ill;
Push, push, with all a beetle's force of will,
Thy ball, alas! rolls ever down again.

Toil without end! And why? That after thee
Dim hosts of groping Scarabs too shall climb
This self-same height? Accursèd progeny
Of Sisyphus, what antenatal crime
Has doomed us too to roll incessantly
Life's Stone, recoiling from the Alps of time?

THE COLOSSI OF THE PLAIN.

ANCIENT of Days! Before the Trojan Wars
You towered as now in your colossal prime,
Watching the rosy footed morning climb
O'er far Arabia's flushing mountain bars.
Despite your weird disfigurement and scars
You dwarf all other monuments. Sublime
Survivors of old Thebes! you baffle Time,
And sit in silent conclave with the Stars.

Ah, once below you through the glittering plain
Stretched avenues of Sphinxes to the Nile;
And, flanked with towers, each consecrated fane
Enshrined its god. The broken gods lie prone
In roofless halls, their hallowed terrors gone,
Helpless beneath Heaven's penetrating smile.

MOURNING WOMEN.

ALL veiled in black, with faces hid from sight,
Crouching together in the jolting cart,
What forms are these that pass alone, apart,
In abject apathy to life's delight?
The motley crowd, fantastically bright,
Shifts gorgeous through each dazzling street and mart;
Only these sisters of the suffering heart
Strike discords in this symphony of light.

Most wretched women! whom your prophet dooms
To take love's penalties without its prize!

Yes ; you shall bear the unborn in your wombs,
And water dusty death with streaming eyes,
And, wailing, beat your breasts among the tombs ;
But souls ye have none fit for Paradise.

THE SÂKIYEH.

"How long shall Man be Nature's fool?" Man cries;
"Be like those great, gaunt oxen, drilled and bound,
Inexorably driven round and round
To turn the water-wheel with bandaged eyes?
And as they trudge beneath Egyptian skies,
Watering the wrinkled desert's beggared ground,
The hoarse Sâkiyeh's lamentable sound
Fills all the land as with a people's sighs?"

Poor Brutes! Who in unconsciousness sublime,
Replenishing the ever-empty jars,
Endow the waste with palms and harvest gold:
And men, who move in rhythm with moving stars,
Should shrink to give the borrowed lives they hold:
Bound blindfold to the groaning wheel of Time.

INTERNAL FIRESIDES.

BEWILDERINGLY, from wildly shaken cloud,
Invisible hands, deft moving everywhere,
Have woven a winding sheet of velvet air,
And laid the dead earth in her downy shroud.
And more and more, in white confusion, crowd
Wan, whirling flakes, while o'er the icy glare
Blue heaven that was glooms blackening o'er the bare
Tree skeletons, to ruthless tempest bowed.

Nay, let the outer world be winter-locked;
Beside the hearth of glowing memories
I warm my life. Once more our boat is rocked,
As on a cradle by the palm-fringed Nile;
And, sharp-cut silhouettes, in single file,
Lank camels lounge against transparent skies.

ON READING THE "RUBÁIYÁT" OF OMAR KHAYYÁM

IN A KENTISH ROSE GARDEN.

BESIDE a Dial in the leafy close,
Where every bush was burning with the Rose,
With million roses falling flake by flake
Upon the lawn in fading summer snows:

I read the Persian Poet's rhyme of old,
Each thought a ruby in a ring of gold—
Old thoughts so young, that, after all these years,
They're writ on every rose-leaf yet unrolled.

You may not know the secret tongue aright
The Sunbeams on their rosy tablets write;
Only a poet may perchance translate
Those ruby-tinted hieroglyphs of light.

SONGS

OF THE

OCCIDENT.

ROMAN ANEMONES.

THE maiden meadows softly blush
  Beneath the enamoured breeze,
And break into one purple flush
  Of frail anemones.

Violet and rose and vermeil white,
  Woven of sun and showers,
They seem to be embodied light
  Transfigured into flowers.

AVE MARIA IN ROME.

FAR away dim violet mountains
Fade away from sight;
Flashing from fantastic fountains,
Jets the liquid light,
Where from Nymph's or Triton's lip
Bubbling waters drip and drip,
Bubbling day and night.

Pealed from tower to answering tower,
O'er the city swells,
Ringing in the hallowed hour,
Rhythm of bells on bells;
And on wings of Choral Song,
Confluent hearts to Mary throng,
From low, cloistered cells.

On the golden ground of even,
  Like a half-way home,
On the pilgrim road to heaven
  Floats St. Peter's Dome ;
High, high, in the air alone,
Man's dread Thought transformed to stone,
  Pinnacled o'er Rome.

Pincio.

THE NEW PROSERPINE.

WHERE, countless as the stars of night,
The daisies made a milky way
Across fresh lawns, and flecked with light,
Old Ilex groves walled round with bay,—

I saw thee stoop, oh lady sweet,
And with those pale, frail hands of thine
Gather the spring flowers at our feet,
Fair as some late-born Proserpine.

Yea, gathering flowers, thou might'st have been
That goddess of the ethereal brow,
Revisiting this radiant scene
From realm of dolorous shades below.

Thou might'st have been that Queen of Sighs,
Love-bound by Hades' dreadful spell;
For veiled within thy heaven-blue eyes,
There lay the Memory of Hell.

Villa Pamfili Doria.

SOUL-DRIFT.

I LET my soul drift with the thistledown
Afloat upon the honeymooning breeze;
My thoughts about the swelling buds are blown,
Blown with the golden dust of flowering trees.

On fleeting gusts of desultory song,
I let my soul drift out into the Spring;
The Psyche flies and palpitates among
The palpitating creatures on the wing.

Go, happy Soul! run fluid in the wave,
Vibrate in light, escape thy natal curse;
Go forth no longer as my body-slave,
But as the heir of all the Universe.

Villa Borghese.

ON A TORSO OF CUPID.

PEACH trees and Judas trees,
  Poppies and roses,
Purple anemones
  In garden closes!
Lost in the limpid sky,
Shrills a gay lark on high;
Lost in the covert's hush,
Gurgles a wooing thrush.

Look, where the ivy weaves,
  Closely embracing,
Tendrils of clinging leaves
  Round him enlacing,

With Nature's sacredness
Clothing the nakedness,
Clothing the marble of
This poor, dismembered love.

Gone are the hands whose skill
  Aimed the light arrow,
Strong once to cure or kill,
  Pierce to the marrow;
Gone are the lips whose kiss
Held hives of honeyed bliss;
Gone too the little feet,
Overfond, overfleet.

O helpless god of old,
  Maimed mid the tender
Blossoming white and gold
  Of April splendour!

Shall we not make thy grave
Where the long grasses wave;
Hide thee, O headless god,
Deep in the daisied sod?

Here thou mayst rest at last
After life's fever;
After love's fret is past
Rest thee for ever.
Nay, broken God of Love,
Still must thou bide above
While, left for woe or weal,
Thou hast a heart to feel.

Villa Mattei.

THE MIRROR OF DIANA.

POPULAR NAME FOR LAKE NEMI.

SHE floats into the quiet skies,
Where, in the circle of the hills,
Her immemorial mirror fills
With light, as of a Virgin's eyes
When, love a-tremble in their blue,
They glow twin violets dipped in dew.

Mild as a metaphor of Sleep,
Immaculately maiden-white,
The Queen Moon of ancestral night
Beholds her image in the deep:
As if a-gaze she beams above
Lake Nemi's magic glass of love.

White rose, white lily of the vale,
  Perfume the even breath of night ;
  In many a burst of sweet delight
The love throb of the nightingale
Swells through lush flowering woods and fills
The circle of the listening hills.

White rose, white lily of the skies,
  The Moon-flower blossoms in the lake ;
  The nightingale for her fair sake
With hopeless love's impassioned cries
Seems fain to sing till song must kill
Himself with one tumultuous trill.

And all the songs and all the scents,
  The light of glowworms and the fires
  Of fire-flies in the cypress spires ;
And all the wild wind instruments
Of pine and ilex as the breeze
Sweeps out their mystic harmonies ;—

All are but Messengers of May
To that white orb of maiden fire
Who fills the moth with mad desire
To die enamoured in her ray,
And turns each dewdrop in the grass
Into a fairy looking-glass.

O Beauty, far and far above
The night moth and the nightingale!
Far, far above life's narrow pale,
O Unattainable! O Love!
Even as the nightingale we cry
For some Ideal set on high.

Haunting the deep reflective mind,
You may surprise its perfect Sphere
Glassed like the Moon within her mere,
Who at a puff of alien wind
Melts in innumerable rings,
Elusive in the flux of things.

ON GUIDO'S AURORA.

GLORIOUS, in saffron robes and veil unfurled,
Borne on the wind of her ecstatic flight,
Aurora floats before the Lord of Light,
And showers her roses on a jubilant world.
Lo, where he beams, ambrosial, yellow curled,
The God of Day, with unapparent might,
Checking his fiery steeds, that plunge and bite
As if from heaven his Chariot should be hurled.

And on the Clouds a many-tinted band
Of Hours dance round their Leader, grave or gay
As glowing near or in his wake they sway;
While poised above the sun-awakened land
The Morning Star, fair herald of the day,
Hovers, a Cupid, back-blown torch in hand.

SPRING IN THE ALPS.

THE flowers are at their Bacchanals
Among the lusty green ;
Wild Orchis and Narcissus waltz
With Marguerite for queen.
Birds join in glees and madrigals
To little loves unseen ;
And unimprisoned Waterfalls
Flash laughing in between.

The Sunlight, leaping from the Heights,
Flames o'er the fields of May,
Winged with unnumbered swallow-flights
Fresh from the long sea way ;

And butterflies and insect mites,
  Born with the new-blown day,
Cross fires in shifting opal lights
  From spray to beckoning spray.

The dandelion puffs her balls,
  Free spinsters of the air,
Who scorn to wait for beetle calls
  Or bees to find them fair;
But breaking through the painted walls
  Their sisters tamely bear,
Fly off in dancing down, which falls
  And sprouts up everywhere.

And far above Earth's flower-filled lap
  And rosy revelry,
The mountain mothers feed her sap
  From herded clouds on high—

Each pinnacle and frozen pap
Whose life has long gone by,
A bridge which spans the mighty gap
Between the earth and sky.

St. Gotthardt.

THE AGNOSTIC.

NOT in the hour of peril, thronged with foes,
Panting to set their heel upon my head,
Or when alone from many wounds I bled
Unflinching beneath Fortune's random blows;
Not when my shuddering hands were doomed to close
The unshrinking eyelids of the stony dead;—
Not then I missed my God, not then—but said:
"Let me not burden God with all man's woes!"

But when resurgent from the womb of night
Spring's Oriflamme of flowers waves from the Sod;
When peak on flashing Alpine peak is trod

By sunbeams on their missionary flight;
When heaven-kissed Earth laughs, garmented in light;—
That is the hour in which I miss my God.

A BRIDAL IN THE BOIS DE BOULOGNE.

How the lilacs, the lilacs are glowing and blowing!
And white through the delicate verdure of May
The blossoming boughs of the hawthorn are showing,
Like beautiful brides in their bridal array;
With cobwebs for laces, and dewdrops for pearls,
Fine as a queen's dowry for workaday girls.

In an aisle of Acacias enlaced and enlacing,
Where the silvery sunlight tunnels the shade,
Where snowflakes of butterflies airily chasing
Each other in trios flash down the arcade:

Arrayed in white muslin the new wedded bride
Looks fresh as a daisy, the groom by her side.

The guests flitted round her with light-hearted laughter;
They hunted the slipper, they kissed in the ring;
Of days gone before and of days coming after
They thought of no more than the bird on the wing.
Were the loves and the laughter and lilacs of May,
With the sunshine above, not enough for the day?

And the lilacs, the lilacs are blowing and glowing!
They pluck them by handfuls and pile in a mass;
And the sap of the Springtide is rising and flowing
Through the veins of the greenwood, the blades of the grass;
Up, up to the last leaf a dance on the tree,
It leaps like a fountain abundant and free.

The blackbirds are building their nests in the bushes,
And whistle at work, as the workpeople do ;
The trees swing their censers, the wind comes in gushes
Of delicate scent mixed of honey and dew.
Now loud and now low through the garrulous trees
A burst of gay music is blown with the breeze.

And the girls and the boys from the faubourgs of Paris,
The premature gamins as wise as fourscore ;
The vain little Margots and wide-awake Harrys,
Surprised into childhood, grew simple once more,
And vied with the cuckoo as, shouting at play,
They dashed through the thickets and darted away.

Ah, fair is the forest's green glimmering splendour,
The leaves of the lime tree a network of light ;

And fringing long aisles of acacia, a tender
And delicate veiling of virginal white,
Where, framed in the gladdening flowers of May,
The bride and her bridesmaids beam gladder than they.

They have crowned her brown tresses with hawthorn in blossom,
They have made her a necklace of daisies for pearls ;
They have set the white lily against her white bosom,
Enthroned on the grass mid a garland of girls ;
With the earth for a footstool, the sky-roof above,
She is queen of the Springtide and Lady of Love.

Oh, the lilacs, the lilacs are glowing and blowing !
They pluck them by bushels as blithely they go

Through the green, scented dusk where the haw-
thorn is showing
A luminous whiteness of blossoming snow.
And the Sun ere he goes gives the Moon half
his light,
As a lamp to lead Love on the bridal night.

A WHITE NIGHT.

THE land lay deluged by the Moon ;
The molten silver of the lake
Shimmered in many a broad lagoon
Between grey isles, whose copse and brake
Lay folded on the water's breast,
Like halcyons in a floating nest.

And like a child who trusts in God
When in the dark it lies alone,
Stretched on the aromatic sod
My heart was laid against your own,
Against your heart, which seemed to be
Mine own to all Eternity.

Lapped in illimitable light,
The woods and waters seemed to swoon,
And clouds like angels winged the night
And slipped away into the Moon,
Lost in that radiant flame above
As we were lapped and lost in love.

Achensee.

THE FOREST POOL.

LOST amid gloom and solitude,
A pool lies hidden in the wood,
A pool the autumn rain has made
Where flowers with their fair shadows played.

Bare as a beggar's board, the trees
Stand in the water to their knees ;
The birds are mute, but far away
I hear a bloodhound's sullen bay.

Blue-eyed forget-me-nots that shook,
Kissed by a little laughing brook,
Kissed too by you with lips so red,
Float in the water drowned and dead.

And dead and drowned 'mid leaves that rot,
Our angel-eyed Forget-me-not,
The love of unforgotten years,
Floats corpse-like in a pool of tears.

Delamere Forest.

NOONDAY REST.

THE willows whisper very, very low
Unto the listening breeze;
Sometimes they lose a leaf which, flickering slow,
Faints on the sunburnt leas.

Beneath the whispering boughs and simmering skies,
On the hot ground at rest,
Still as a stone, a ragged woman lies,
Her baby at the breast.

Nibbling around her browse monotonous sheep,
Flies buzz about her head;
Her heavy eyes are shuttered by a sleep
As of the slumbering dead.

The happy birds that live to love and sing,
  Flitting from bough to bough,
Peer softly at this ghastly human thing
  With grizzled hair and brow.

O'er what strange ways may not these feet have
    trod
  That match the cracking clay?
Man had no pity on her—no, nor God—
  A nameless castaway!

But Mother Earth now hugs her to her breast,
  Defiled or undefiled;
And willows rock the weary soul to rest,
  As she, even she, her child.

Hampstead Heath.

CROSS-ROADS.

THE rain beat in our faces,
And shrill the wild airs grew;
The long-maned clouds in races
Coursed o'er heaven's windy blue.

The tortured trees were lashing
Each other in their wrath,
Their wet leaves wildly dashing
Across the forest path.

We did not heed the sweeping
Of storm-bewildered rain;
Our cheeks were wet with weeping,
Our hearts were wrung with pain.

For where the cross-roads sever,
Parting to East and West,
We bade good-bye for ever
To what we each loved best.

The Moors.

THE MOAT.

AROUND this lichened home of hoary peace,
Invulnerable in its glassy moat,
A breath of ghostly summers seems to float
And murmur mid the immemorial trees.
The tender slopes, where cattle browse at ease,
Swell softly, like a pigeon's emerald throat;
And, self-oblivious, Time forgets to note
The flight of velvet-footed centuries.

The very sunlight, hushed within the close,
Sleeps indolently by the Yew's slow shade;
Still as a relic some old Master made
The jewelled peacock's rich enamel glows;
And on yon mossy wall that youthful rose
Blooms like a rose that never means to fade.

Groombridge.

SHAKESPEARE SONNETS.

ANNE HATHAWAY'S COTTAGE.

Is this the Cottage, ivy-girt and crowned,
And this the path down which our Shakespeare ran,
When, in the April of his love, sweet Anne
Made all his mighty pulses throb and bound;
Where, mid coy buds and winking flowers around,
She blushed a rarer rose than roses can,
To greet her Will — even Him, fair Avon's Swan—
Whose name has turned this plot to holy ground?

To these dear walls, once dear to Shakespeare's eyes,
Time's Vandal hand itself has done no wrong;
This nestling lattice opened to his song,
When, with the lark, he bade his love arise
In words whose strong enchantment never dies—
Old as these flowers, and, like them, ever young.

ANNE HATHAWAY.

His Eve of Women! She, whose mortal lot
Was linked to an Immortal's unaware,
With Love's lost Eden in her blissful air,
Perchance would greet him in this blessed spot.
No shadow of the coming days durst blot,
The flower-like face, so innocently fair,
As lip met lip, and lily arms, all bare,
Clung round him in a perfect lover's knot.

Was not this Anne the flame-like daffodil
Of Shakespeare's March, whose maiden beauty took
His senses captive? Thus the stripling brook
Mirrors a wild flower nodding by the mill,
Then grows a river in which proud cities look,
And with a land's load widens seaward still.

CLEVE WOODS.

SWEET Avon glides where clinging rushes seem
To stay his course, and, in his flattering glass,
Meadows and hills and mellow woodlands pass,
A fairer world as imaged in a dream.
And sometimes, in a visionary gleam,
From out the secret covert's tangled mass,
The fisher-bird starts from the rustling grass,
A jewelled shuttle shot along the stream.

Even here, methinks, when moon-lapped shallows smiled
Round isles no bigger than a baby cot,
Titania found a glowworm-lighted child,
Led far astray, and, with anointing hand
Sprinkling clear dew from a forget-me-not,
Hailed him the Laureate of her Fairyland.

LOST TREASURE.

THE autumn day steals, pallid as a ghost,
Along these fields and man-forsaken ways;
And o'er the hedgerows bramble-knotted maze
The whitening locks of Old Man's Beard are tost.
Here, shrunk by centuries of fire and frost,
A crab tree stands where—lingering gossip says—
In ocean-moated England's golden days,
Great treasure, in a frolic, once was lost.

Here—fresh from fumes of some Falstaffian bout,
When famous champions, fired by many a bet,
Had drained huge bumpers while the stars would set—
Beneath its reeling branches by the way,
Till twice twelve hours of April bloom were out—
Locked in oblivion—Shakespeare lost a day.

THE AVON.

WHAT are the Willows whispering in a row,
Nodding their old heads o'er the river's edge?
What does the West wind whisper to the sedge
And to the shame-faced purples drooping low?
Why sobs the water, in its broken flow
Lapping against the grey weir's ruined ledge?
And, in the thorny shelter of the hedge,
What bird unloads his little heart of woe?

Green Avon's haunted! Look, from yonder bank
The willow leans, that hath not ceased to weep,
Whence, hanging garlands, fair Ophelia sank;
Since Jacques moped here the trees have had a tongue;
And all these streams and whispering willows keep
The moan of Desdemona's dying song.

EVENSONG.

(*HOLY TRINITY CHURCH.*)

THE hectic autumn's dilatory fire
Has turned this lime tree to a sevenfold brand,
Which, self consuming, lights the sunless land,
A death to which all poet souls aspire.
Above the graves, where all men's vain desire
Is hushed at last as by a Mother's hand,
And, Time confounded, Love's blank records stand,
The Evensong swells from the pulsing choir.

What incommunicable presence clings
To this grey church and willowy twilight stream?
Am I the dupe of some delusive dream?
Or, like faint fluid phosphorent rings
On refluent seas, doth Shakespeare's spirit gleam
Pervasive round these old familiar things?

SHAKESPEARE.

YEARNING to know herself for all she was,
Her passionate clash of warring good and ill,
Her new life ever ground in Death's old mill,
With every delicate detail and *en masse*,—
Blind Nature strove. Lo, then it came to pass,
That Time, to work out her unconscious Will,
Once wrought the Mind which she had groped for still,
And she beheld herself as in a glass.

The world of men, unrolled before our sight,
Showed like a map, where stream and waterfall
And village-cradling vale and cloud-capped height
Stand faithfully recorded, great and small;
For Shakespeare was, and at his touch, with light
Impartial as the Sun's, revealed the All.

CEDARS OF LEBANON AT WARWICK CASTLE.

CEDARS of Lebanon! Labyrinths of Shade,
Making a mystery of open day;
With layers of gloom keeping the Sun at bay,
And solemn boughs which never bloom or fade.
Contemporaries of that great Crusade,
When militant Christendom leaped up one day,
Fired by the Cross, and, rushing to the fray,
Poured Eastward as oracular Peter bade.

Borne hither when Christ's Sepulchre was won,
And planted by hoar Warwick's feudal walls,
You grew, o'ershadowing every rival stem.
When English woods don May's fresh coronals,
Say,—Mourn ye still for lost Jerusalem,
Funeral trees—beloved of Lebanon?

MISCELLANEOUS PIECES.

PASTICHE.

I.

LOVE, oh, Love's a dainty sweeting,
Wooing now, and now retreating ;
Brightest joy and blackest care,
Swift as light, and light as air.

II.

Would you seize and fix and capture
All his evanescent rapture ?
Bind him fast with golden curls,
Fetter with a chain of pearls ?

III.

Would you catch him in a net,
Like a white moth prankt with jet ?

Clutch him, and his bloomy wing
Turns a dead, discoloured thing!

IV.

Pluck him like a rosebud red,
And he leaves a thorn instead;
Let him go without a care,
And he follows unaware.

V.

Love, oh, Love's a dainty sweeting,
Wooing now, and now retreating;
Lightly come, and lightly gone,
Lost when most securely won!

MARRIAGE.

LOVE springs as lightly from the human heart
  As springs the lovely rose upon the brier,
  Which turns the common hedge to floral fire,
As Love wings Time with rosy-feathered dart.
But marriage is the subtlest work of art
  Of all the arts which lift the spirit higher;
  The incarnation of the heart's desire—
Which masters Time—set on Man's will apart.

The Many try, but oh! how few are they
  To whom that finest of the arts is given
Which shall teach Love, the rosy runaway,
  To bide from bridal Morn to brooding Even.
Yet this—this only—is the narrow way
  By which, while yet on earth, we enter heaven.

ONCE WE PLAYED.

ONCE we played at love together—
Played it smartly, if you please;
Lightly, as a windblown feather,
Did we stake a heart apiece.

Oh, it was delicious fooling!
In the hottest of the game,
Without thought of future cooling,
All too quickly burned Life's flame.

In this give-and-take of glances,
Kisses sweet as honey dews,
When we played with equal chances,
Did you win, or did I lose?

Was your heart then hurt to bleeding,
In the ardour of the throw?
Was it then I lost, unheeding,
Lost my heart so long ago?

Who shall say? The game is over.
Of us two who loved in fun,
One lies low beneath the clover,
One lives lonely in the sun.

AFFINITIES.

I.

I WILL take your thoughts to my heart;
I will keep and garner them there
Locked in a casket apart.
Far above rubies or rare
Pearls from the prodigal deep,
Which men stake their lives on to find,
And women their beauty to keep,
I will treasure the pearls of your mind.

How long has it taken the earth
To crystalize gems in a mine?
How long was the sea giving birth
To her pearls, washed in bitterest brine?

What sorrows, what struggles, what fierce
  Endeavour of lives in the past,
Hearts tempered by fire and tears,
  To fashion your manhood at last!

II.

TAKE me to thy heart, and let me
Rest my head a little while;
Rest my heart from griefs that fret me
In the mercy of thy smile.

In a twilight pause of feeling,
Time to say a moment's grace,
Put thy hands, whose touch is healing,
Put them gently on my face.

Found too late in Life's wild welter,
All I ask, for weal and woe,
Friend, a moment's friendly shelter,
And thy blessing ere I go.

III.

FULL many loves and friendships dear
Have blossomed brightly in my path ;
And some were like the primrose rathe,
And withered with the vernal year.

And some were like the joyous rose,
Most prodigal with scent and hue,
That glows while yet the sky is blue,
And falls with every wind that blows—

Mere guests and annuals of the heart ;
But you are that perennial bay,
Greenest when greener leaves decay,
Whom only death shall bid depart.

TO A FRIEND,

WITH A VOLUME OF VERSES.

To you who dwell withdrawn, above
The world's tumultuous strife,
And, in an atmosphere of love,
Have triumphed over life;

To you whose heart has kept so young
Beneath the weight of years,
I give these passion flowers of song,
Still wet with undried tears.

You too have trod that stony path
Which steeply winds afar,
And seen, through nights of storm and wrath,
The bright and Morning Star;

Where, shining o'er the Alps of time
On valleys full of mist,
It beckons us to peaks sublime,
Oh, brave Idealist.

AS MANY STARS.

As many stars as are aglow
  Deep in the hollows of the night;
As many as the flowers that blow
  Beneath the kindling light;

As many as the birds that fly
  Unpiloted across the deep;
As many as the clouds on high,
  And all the drops they weep;

As many as the leaves that fall
  In autumn, on the withering lea,
When wind to thundering wind doth call,
  And sea calls unto sea;

As many as the multitude
Of quiet graves, where mutely bide
The wicked people and the good,
Laid softly side by side ;—

So many thoughts, so many tears,
Such hosts of prayers, are sent on high,
Seeking, through all Man's perished years,
A love that will not die.

LOVE'S VISION.

TRANSPORTED out of self by Youth's sweet madness,
Emulous of love, to Love's empyrean height,
Where I beheld you aureoled in light,
My soul upsprang on wings of angel-gladness.
Far, far below, the earth and all earth's badness—
A speck of dust—slipped darkling into night,
As suns of fairer planets flamed in sight,
Pure orbs or bliss unstained by gloom or sadness.

Lo, as I soared etherially on high,
You vanished, from my swimming eyes aloof,
Alone, alone, within the empty sky,
I reached out giddily, and reeling fell
From starriest heaven, to plunge in lowest hell,
My proud heart broken on Earth's humblest roof.

A PARABLE.

BETWEEN the sandhills and the sea
A narrow strip of silver sand,
Whereon a little maid doth stand,
Who picks up shells continually
Between the sandhills and the sea.

Far as her wondering eyes can reach
A Vastness, heaving grey in grey
To the frayed edges where the day
Furls his red standard on the breach,
Between the skyline and the beach.

The waters of the flowing tide
Cast up the seapink shells and weed ;
She toys with shells, and doth not heed
The ocean, which on every side
Is closing round her vast and wide.

It creeps her way as if in play,
Pink shells at her pink feet to cast;
But now the wild waves hold her fast,
And bear her off and melt away
A Vastness heaving gray in gray.

BETWEEN SLEEP AND WAKING.

SOFTLY in a dream I heard,
  Ere the day was breaking,
Softly call a cuckoo bird
  Between sleep and waking.

Calling through the rippling rain
  And red orchard blossom ;
Calling up old love again,
  Buried in my bosom ;

Calling till he brought you too
  From some magic region ;
And the whole spring followed you,
  Birds on birds in legion.

Youth was in your beaming glance,
Love a rainbow round you;
Blushing trees began to dance,
Wreaths of roses crowned you.

And I called your name, and woke
To the cuckoo's calling;
And you waned in waning smoke,
As the rain was falling.

Had the cuckoo called "Adieu,"
Ere the day was breaking?
All the old wounds bled anew
Between sleep and waking.

REST.

We are so tired, my heart and I.
Of all things here beneath the sky
One only thing would please us best—
Endless, unfathomable rest.

We are so tired; we ask no more
Than just to slip out by Life's door;
And leave behind the noisy rout
And everlasting turn about.

Once it seemed well to run on too
With her importunate, fevered crew,
And snatch amid the frantic strife
Some morsel from the board of life.

But we are tired. At Life's crude hands
We ask no gift she understands ;
But kneel to him she hates to crave
The absolution of the grave.

MYSTERY OF MYSTERIES.

BEFORE the abyss of the unanswering grave
Each mortal stands at last aloof, alone,
With his beloved one turned as deaf as stone,
However rebel love may storm and rave.
No will, however strong, avails to save
The wrecked identity knit to our own ;
We may not hoard one treasured look or tone,
Dissolved in foam on Death's dissolving wave.

Is this the End? This handful of brown earth
For all releasing elements to take
And free for ever from the bonds of birth?
Or will true life from Life's disguises break,
Called to that vast confederacy of minds
Which casts all flesh as chaff to all the winds?

NOTES.

Page 11, line 12. "Nehârak Saîd": "May thy day be happy."

Page 13. "Sphinx-Money": Small fossil shells or ammonites, frequently found in some parts of the desert.

Page 17, line 13. "Bab-el-Molouk": The Gate of the Kings. The entrance to the rocky tombs, most of which belong to the eighteenth and nineteenth Dynasties.

Page 18, line 7. "Tuat": The depth of the grave.

Page 21, line 7. "While Thoth holds the trembling balance, weighs the heart and seals its fate." Perhaps of all Egyptian beliefs, none is so widely known as "The Judgment of the Dead." It is frequently represented on tombs and temples, and there is a remarkable wall-painting of it in the beautiful little temple of Dêr-el-Medîneh. After Osiris, Judge of the under world, Thoth plays the chief part in this impressive ceremony. He is the Moon-god, generally represented as an Ibis or Baboon. "The soul first advanced to the foot of the throne, carrying on its outstretched hands the image of its heart or of its eyes, agents and accomplices of its vices and virtues. It humbly 'smelt the earth,' then arose, and with uplifted hands recited its profession of faith. In the middle of the hall its acts were weighed by the assessors. Like all objects belonging to the gods, the balance is magic. Truth squats upon one of the scales;

Thoth places the heart upon the other, and, always merciful, bears upon the side of Truth, that judgment may be favourably inclined. He affirms that the heart is light of offence, inscribes the results of the proceeding upon a wooden tablet, and pronounces the verdict aloud."—"The Dawn of Civilization," by G. Maspero.

Page 22, line 11. "In the Sunboat and the Moonboat": The chief barks of Râ, the Sun-god, were called Saktît and Mazît. He entered one on his rising in the East, which carried him along the celestial river; and the other about the middle of his course, which bore him to the land of Manû, which is at the entrance of Hades.

Page 26. "Horus": Horus, the Egyptian Apollo, son of Osiris and Isis, and avenger of his murdered father. He is chiefly associated with the victoriously rising sun, and a slayer of the Serpent, like all Sun-gods. He is generally depicted with the side-lock of infancy, or as hawk-headed, or simply as a great golden Sparrow-Hawk, who puts all other birds to flight.

Page 29. "Nuit": One of the names for the primæval night of Egyptian mythology. She is described as follows in an inscription cut on the front of the mummy-case of Mykerinos, the builder of the third great Pyramid: "Thy Mother Nuit has spread herself out over thee in her name of Mystery of the Heavens."

Page 31. "Egyptian Theosophy." The Egyptian imagination was extremely fertile in inventing myths of the creation. "One amongst many was that Sibû was concealed under the form of a colossal gander, whose mate once laid the Sun-Egg, and perhaps still laid it daily. From the piercing cries wherewith he congratulated her, and announced the good news to all who cared to hear it—after

the manner of his kind—he had received the flattering epithet of Ngagu-oirû, the Great Cackler. Other versions repudiated the goose in favour of a vigorous bull, the father of gods and men, whose companion was a cow, a large-eyed Hâthor, of beautiful countenance."—"The Dawn of Civilization," by G. Maspero.

Page 34. "The Moon of Ramadân." The month of Ramadân is the month of fasting, which begins as soon as a Muslim declares that he has seen the new moon. From daybreak to sunset, throughout the month, eating and drinking are absolutely prohibited, but the faithful indemnify themselves by feasting and smoking throughout a great part of the night.

Page 37, line 3—

"And brought his gods for offering
Mountains of severed hands."

The Pharaohs used to cut off the hands of their conquered enemies, and make them an offering to their gods. The subject is depicted in a striking wall-painting of the Temple at Medinet Haboo.

Page 40. "The Beautiful Beeshareen Boy." The Beeshareens are a wandering desert tribe of Upper Egypt, reminding one of our Gypsies. Many of them are remarkably handsome, more particularly in childhood. The grace of their movements and charm of manner must strike all travellers on the Nile. The children haunt the shore where boats land, and set up an incessant cry for "backsheesh," and there are few who can resist the winning smiles with which they sweeten their importunities. Conspicuous among the crowd was a lovely boy of sixteen, who attracted the attention of artists and photographers two or three winters ago. He had the elegant proportions of a Tanagra statuette, and was

so constantly asked to sit for his portrait that he must have thought that that was the end and aim of all tourists. Finally, he was carried off to the World's Fair with other curiosities of Egypt. When the Beeshareens returned to Assouan he was not amongst them, and rumour says that he got as far as Marseilles, where he utterly vanished. This tribe dress their profuse black hair in quite an extraordinary fashion. It is worn in countless little plaits, with a high, fuzzy bunch in the centre. I have heard it said that they wear it thus in memory of their descent from one of the lost tribes of Israel.

Page 63, line 7—

"A human form, indeed, but stone :
A cold, colossal Man ! "

This unfinished Colossus of red granite was discovered by two English officers while riding in the desert round Assouan. The scene is one of extraordinary desolation. The ash-coloured sand, broken by blue-black ridges, is a chaos of scattered stones and boulders which might be part of a landscape in the moon. The statue is believed to be that of Amenhotep III., to whom we owe the two Colossi of the Plain, of which one is the famous "Vocal Memnon." He was also the Egyptian Nimrod, and on one of his lion-hunting expeditions to the South is said to have met a beautiful young maiden, whom he married, though she was neither Egyptian nor of royal race. She was that famous Queen Thi who introduced the worship of the Sun's disk into Egypt.

Page 66. "Scarabæus." The beetle (*Scarabæus sacer*) was the emblem of the principle of life and creative power, which the Egyptians worshipped under such manifold forms. It was supposed to have no female, and to roll the eggs which produce its offspring into a kind of ball, sparing no effort to place them in safety.

Page 70. "The Sâkiyeh": The ancient Egyptian water-wheel, still in use. It is made of a notch-wheel, fixed vertically on a horizontal axle, and a long chain of earthenware vessels brings the water either from the river itself or from some little branch canal, and empties it into a system of troughs and reservoirs.

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BY MATHILDE BLIND.

THE PROPHECY OF SAINT ORAN, and other Poems.

THE HEATHER ON FIRE.

THE ASCENT OF MAN.

DRAMAS IN MINIATURE.

SONGS AND SONNETS.

TARANTELLA: A Romance.

OPINIONS OF THE PRESS.

THE PROPHECY OF SAINT ORAN,

And other Poems.

"There is perhaps no phase of our history more capable of poetic treatment than the sainted lives of the Irish monks who first spread the Christian faith over the western shores of Scotland, and yet it would be difficult to point to a single representative poem having Saint Columba and the devoted band of his disciples for its heroes. An attempt at filling up this gap has recently been made by Miss Blind in a narrative poem devoted to the fate of St. Oran, the friend and disciple of St. Columba. . . . Apart from the sonorous beauty of her lines, there is in her diction a straightforwardness and simplicity, and an entire absence of affectation and false sentiment, which, combined with considerable power of characterization, make her volume a remarkable contribution to English literature."—*Times*, September 26, 1881.

"To disturb the *motif* of a legend is always a bold, and mostly a rash proceeding. . . . And yet so skilfully is the story handled that the main incidents of the legend do not lose, but gain by this disturbance of the *motif*, and the character of Oran, which with the old *motif* could only have presented the single side of the religious enthusiast, becomes a character exhibiting that complexity which modern taste demands. . . . Directness of style and lucidity of narrative are the characteristic excellences of the poem. There are few contemporary poets who could have done so much dramatic business in so few lines. . . . In each of the sonnets there is a thought that is well expressed, and worth expressing."—*Athenæum*, July 30, 1881.

"It is in the domain of character that the poem is distinguished by its highest excellence. There is an ideal statuesqueness embodied in the person of St. Columba such as is felt to possess a powerful appeal to the imagination. The poem embraces many passions, of which the most tender and beautiful finds expression in the exquisite creation of the radiant golden-haired girl for whose love St. Oran breaks his vow of chastity. But the really powerful contribution to our knowledge of character which this book contains is fittingly centred in St. Oran himself. A dramatic instinct of high order finds utterance in his struggles between opposing passions. Nor are the metrical excellences of the poem less conspicuous. . . . If one were in need of some single phrase by which to denote the ultimate effect produced by this book, one might say that it seems the most *mature* of all recent first efforts, even of established rank."—*Academy*, July 16, 1881.

"In the choice of a subject for her chief poem she has been singularly fortunate. . . . That a story such as this is full of poetical suggestiveness is obvious, and Miss Blind has proved herself equal to the occasion. She has avoided writing anything approaching to a 'tendency poem.' She metes out justice with an equal hand to all her characters. The genuine enthusiasm and religious zeal of the monks are set forth in language as inspired as is the final protest of St. Oran against their narrow fanaticism; and one of the best passages in the book is indeed the Sermon in which St. Columba announces the Gospel of love and redemption to the islanders."—*Pall Mall Gazette*, August 22, 1881.

"'The Prophecy of Saint Oran' is skilfully told and vigorously written. In the description of nature and scenery; in the delineation of character; and in the management of singularly difficult positions, there is visible a firm and practised hand, a bold and unmistakable power. 'The Street Children's Dance' not unworthily ranks with some of the touching pieces of Hood, Mrs. Barrett Browning, and others."—*British Mail*, September 1, 1881.

"The only excuse for street music that can reasonably be considered valid is the touching plea for public toleration which is embodied in Miss Mathilde Blind's poem, wherein the spectacle of poor children dancing round an organ is as pathetically moralized and as tender and full of loving pity as Mrs. Browning's 'Cry of the Children.'"—*Daily Telegraph*, September 1, 1881.

"The poem is rich in true description of sea and sky and mountain, and glows in sympathy with the deeper feelings which stir humanity. There has been published no poem of such creative suggestiveness as this for many a day, and we hope and believe that it is the precursor of other work by the same unfaltering hand. This poem is a true work of art, complete and beautiful. There is in the volume other work which shows a master's touch. . . ."—*Manchester Examiner and Times*, July 1, 1882.

"Il y a là bien plus qu'une simple facilité de versification. Le récit du poeme d'ouverture est grand et fort, la manière de raconter est pleine de poésie et d'effet. Depuis la mort de Mrs. Barrett Browning, nous n'avons point eu de poésie aussi hautement inspirée qui ait jailli d'une source féminine."—*Le Livre*, Paris, October 10, 1881.

THE HEATHER ON FIRE:

A Tale of the Highland Clearances.

"Miss Blind has produced one of the most noticeable and moving poems which recent years have added to our shelves. . . . As a singer with a message her attempt is praiseworthy, and her performance is fairly self-consistent. It is eminently homogeneous; the passion once felt, the inspiration once obeyed, the well-head pours forth its stream in a strong and uniform current, which knows no pause until its impulse ceases. . . . The story is pathetic at once in its simplicity and in its terror. . . . We congratulate the author upon her boldness in choosing a subject of our own time, fertile in what is pathetic, and free from any taint of the vulgar and conventional. Poetry of late years has tended too much towards motives of a merely fanciful and abstruse, sometimes a plainly artificial, character; and we have had much of lyrical energy or attraction, with little of the real marrow of human life, the flesh and blood of man and woman. Positive subject-matter, the emotion which inheres in actual life, the very smile and the very tear and heart-pang, are, after all, precious to poetry, and we have them here. 'The Heather on Fire' may possibly prove to be something of a new departure, and one that was certainly not superfluous."—*Athenæum*, July 17, 1886.

"Miss Blind has chosen for her new poem one of those terrible Highland clearances which stain the history of Scotch landlordism. Though her tale is a fiction it is too well founded on fact. . . . It may be said generally of the poem that the most difficult scenes are those in which Miss Blind succeeds best; and on the whole we are inclined to think that its greatest and most surprising success is the picture of the poor old soldier Rory driven mad by the burning of his wife. In his frenzy he mixes up his old battles with the French and the descent of the landlord's ejectors upon the village."—*Academy*, August 7, 1886.

"In this versified tale of Highland clearances, Mathilde Blind has, with genuine poetic instinct, selected a family the fortunes of which form the burden of her story. . . . Literature and poetry are never seen at their best save in contact with actual life. . . . This little book abounds in vivid delineation of character, and is redolent with the noblest human sympathy."—*Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, June 3, 1886.

"A subject which has painfully preoccupied public opinion is, in the poem entitled 'The Heather on Fire,' treated with characteristic power by Miss Mathilde

Blind. Irish evictions have offered so convenient a theme to party strife, that the sufferings of the unhappy Highland crofters have not always met with the compassion they were so well calculated to inspire. In eloquent and forcible verse, Miss Blind tells the tale of their wrongs, their resistance to the hard fate imposed upon them, and describes the bitter grief with which,

> 'Crowding on the decks with hungry eyes,
> Straining towards the coast that flies and flies,'

those among them driven into exile look on the shores to which many bid an eternal farewell. Both as a narrative and descriptive poem 'The Heather on Fire' is equally remarkable."—*Morning Post*, July 30, 1886.

"We are happy in being able to extend to the present poem a welcome equally sincere and equally hearty; for it is a poem that is rich not only in power and beauty but in that 'enthusiasm of humanity' which stirs and moves us, and of which so much contemporary verse is almost painfully deficient. Miss Blind does not possess her theme; she is possessed by it, as was Mrs. Browning when she wrote 'Aurora Leigh.' . . . We can best describe the kind of her success by noting the fact that while engaged in the perusal of her book we do not say, 'What a fine poem!' but 'What a terrible story!' or, more probably still, say nothing at all, but read on and on under the spell of a great horror and an overpowering pity. Poetry of which this can be said needs no other recommendation, and, therefore, we need not unduly lengthen our review of 'The Heather on Fire.'"—*Manchester Examiner and Times*, September 1, 1886.

"There are charming pictures of West Highland scenery, in Arran apparently, and of the surroundings and conditions of Highland cottar life."—*Scotsman*, July 20, 1886.

"In 'The Heather on Fire,' she exhibits a clearness and beauty of diction, a rhythmical correctness, a grace and simplicity of style which mark her out as no slavish follower of any poetic 'school,' but an unaffected and truthful expression of her own feelings. . . . Whatever the reader's opinion may be on the grievance which Miss Blind throws into such fierce light, he cannot fail to be pleased with her graceful tale, so gracefully and simply told."—*Glasgow Herald*, July 20, 1886.

"Miss Mathilde Blind's poem is the tragic epic of the old evictions in the Highlands of Scotland. It is a strange fact that the general reader knows more about the siege of Troy, the Norman Conquest, and the Wars of the Roses than about such matters in the very history of our own days as the depopulation of the Highlands of Scotland by the landlords. The old story comes to the front just now by reason of the crofter agitation. In the preface to her fine and touching epic, and in the notes at the end, Miss Blind passes in review some of the facts of the eviction of the Glen Sannox people by the Duke of Hamilton in 1832, where, as she says, 'the progress of civilization, which has redeemed many a wilderness and gladdened the solitary places of the world, has come with a curse to these Highland glens, and turned green pastures and golden harvest fields once more into a desert.' The 'Heather on Fire' is a poem in four cantos—or 'Duans'—comprising about two hundred stanzas."—*School Board Chronicle*, July 10, 1886.

"It is written in a strain which must of necessity appeal to the sympathies of all grades of society, and at the same time it is eminently poetical, both in thought and rhythm."—*Western Antiquary*, August, 1886.

"A book like this forms an admirable corrective to the harsh and cold-blooded theories of such landlords as the Duke of Argyll on the rights of his class."—*Cambridge Independent Press*, August, 1886.

"There is a sonorous beauty, a classic dignity and depth of pathos throughout her four cantos, and a vivid and thrilling description is given of the industrious hamlets, the contented, happy people, and the ruthless manner in which the evictions were effected by the stewards and ground-officers."—*Elgin Courant*, August, 1886.

TARANTELLA:

A Romance.

"The author of this two-volumed romance is favourably known by other works, and by the appreciative 'Life of George Eliot.' The strange effects of the bite of a tarantula spider, so firmly believed in by the Italian peasantry, and the marvellous power of musical enthusiasm, supply the motive of the story; and the characters are portrayed with great force, pathos, and a touch of homely humour."—*Bookseller*, Christmas, 1884.

"Miss Blind may be congratulated on 'Tarantella,' her first novel. In the *récit* (as we have called it) of the musician, Emanuel Sturm, nearly all the interest of the book is concentrated. The violinist, poor and unknown, finds himself at Capri. Accident brings him, one evening, to a frightened group of women, one of whom has just been bitten by the tarantula, and, according to the popular superstition, he is implored to play, in order to drive the poison out of her. He refuses at first, but afterwards consents, and finding himself almost supernaturally inspired, plays an improvised 'Tarantella' throughout a whole stormy night, finally curing the girl. The tune thus strangely hit on spreads, and ultimately makes him famous, but the love he has conceived for his Antonella brings him almost as much misery as his music brings him fame."—*Pall Mall Gazette*, February 5, 1885.

"Admiration of the delicate sketching now in vogue should not blind us to the very opposite kind of charm of which 'Tarantella' is full. Entirely poetical in conception (save that it is not written in metre), 'Tarantella' is more essentially a poem than many a narrative written in smooth and elegant verse. . . . 'Tarantella' is indeed full of strange originality and scenic effects of uncommon powers. The dance among the ruins is not likely to be soon forgotten by the most unimaginative of readers, and it is rarely, we think, that in an English novel the psychology of the poetic temperament has been touched by a hand so delicate and at the same time so strong."—*Athenæum*, January 17, 1885.

"There is abundant imagination, and the language is generally fresh and vigorous. . . . The author finds many opportunities of introducing scenes from German life, which are evidently written with intimate knowledge. . . This is distinctly a novel to read."—*Echo*, June 16, 1886.

"This powerful and pathetic tale has carried us more completely out of ourselves and along with it than any work of fiction we have read for many a day. . . . Her (Miss Blind's) word-pictures glow with rich local colours; she is a complete mistress of the art of dramatic cause and effect. When once fairly under weigh, she never allows the interest to flag for a single moment. Thus it is only when we have laid down the final volume that we have time or inclination to pause and recognize the care and art which have contributed to this triumphant result; to turn back . . . and dwell on the author's extraordinary knowledge of the human heart—extraordinary alike for its depth and its range. As for the wit and humour with which the book is freely sprinkled, the poetic and artistic spirit which pervades it throughout, they can only be appreciated on a second or a third perusal."—*Life*, December 25, 1884.

"'Tarantella' is extremely clever, and the treatment of the weird subject she has chosen picturesque in the extreme. The local colouring is especially fine and her character studies extremely strong. Thrice welcome in its two-volume form, 'Tarantella' is a book bound to make its mark."—*Whitehall Review*, December 11, 1884.

"We have very ingenious resources in music and the bite of the tarantula, which alone music is said to heal. Notwithstanding the sense of improbability, we follow the strange fortunes of Antonella, Countess Ogotshka, and her almost magical transformation with interest. Mina, the innocent girl, her friend, is well delineated, and Emanuel Sturm, the wonderful violinist and composer, for whose portrait Paganini has doubtless been available, is original, no less than his friend the painter."—*British Quarterly*, January, 1885.

"'Tarantella' is a very clever story, with plenty of action and not without tragic incidents. The author has also plenty of humour, and there is at least as much light as shade in the book. Mina is not less delightful than the Countess is objectionable, in spite of her beauty and her daring."—*London Figaro*, November 20, 1886.

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